

The Priceless Gift.

(ORIGINAL)

This is a true historical story, but as I give it in story form I think it best to change the names. The main incidents are given exactly as they occurred in the latter half of the eighteenth century.

Alvin Marston, a cabinetmaker, had a son, John, whom the father was bringing up in his business. But the young man was of a very different texture from that of a builder of furniture. He was of an ideal, dreamy nature and instead of attending to his duties spent his time in making little sketches. Was there a clean, smooth board or an unpolished desk in the shop there was sure to be a pencil drawing on it which could at once be recognized as a likeness of some of the workmen. Alvin Marston saw some of them and was pleased with them. He was more pleased when he learned that his son had made them and, relinquishing his design of teaching the boy a trade, put him in a way to take drawing lessons. The student improved rapidly, showing sufficient talent to warrant becoming a professional artist. Then he fell ill.

There being no one in the family to nurse him, a country girl was called in for the purpose. That was long before trained nurses were thought of. Mary Keyes was not made attractive by the ugliness that now decorates the nose. She had no beauty to win the young artist, nor did she mental endowments above her station. She was a plain country girl, nothing more. But John Marston was imaginative. He saw her moving about the room ministering to his comfort, and of the commonplace figure he made a Venus, while the ordinary face in his eyes became a paragon of sweeteness.

The invalid recovered and married Mary Keyes. He lived with her several years and had children by her. Had it not been for his talents doubtless there would be no special story in his life. It was only too evident that he was born for a higher life than the one he was leading. His pictures excited the admiration of critics, and the young man grew ambitious. One day he said goodbye to his wife and children and went to London to study art. He did not return to them for more than thirty years.

The cabinetmaker's son became a great artist. In portrait painting he was the only rival to the celebrated Sir Joshua Reynolds. His name, his fame, his praise, were on every lip. He was invited into the houses of the nobility and was paid enormous sums for painting their portraits.

Why did he never return to his family? Who knows? Possibly before he left home the beauties he had himself created had fallen away and he saw the ordinary woman, neither endowed with beauty of person nor of mind. Perhaps the scales were removed from his eyes by visions of the women of the capital. One of these after he became famous wrote about him a spell.

She had a beautiful body and a corrupt soul. There was the same image, inactive process in a different form as had moved him in the case of Mary Keyes. Mary had a pure spirit, but an ordinary face and figure, on which he had built a thing of beauty. On the woman he met in London, beautiful without and rotten within, he built a superstructure that enthralled him. She was the mistress of the greatest sinner of a nation of sinners. She was pleased to bewitch the famous painter, but she laughed at his bewitchment. He stretched forth his hand to grasp a rose and plucked a thorn.

And now comes something more perfect than any of the beautiful creations of the artists.

An old man, he returns to the wife and family he has neglected for the greater part of a lifetime. His wife, too, has grown old. She knows of his triumphs and of his desertion of her in heart as well as in person. We may expect that she will receive him as a stranger, that she will reproach him with his neglect and that she who had the first right to share in his triumphs has been denied them, that, if possible, they would have been given to others—others signally unworthy of them.

When the aged invalid rose up to her door she went out with open arms to receive him. He tottered into the house supported by her. She spoke no word of reproach. The love he had slighted for more than three decades was still there for him. As she had nursed him in his youth she nursed him in his old age.

Again he saw her ministering to him not as a youth, in youth himself with life before them, but as a decrepit old man. The dreams that then dreamed had been for more than realized, but not for her, and they could not now be recalled that she might enjoy them. He remembered his triumphs and how unworthily they had been bestowed. And yet she was caring for him as tenderly as if he had shared them with her.

A poet has created a fable of a poet asking for admittance to heaven and denied unless she will bring a gift most acceptable. She goes back to earth and brings various gifts, all of which are rejected. At last she takes a tear from the eye of a repentant sinner. This is the gift, the one gift, by which she may attain a dwelling with the blessed.

May not the neglected wife have seen that tear in the eye of the man who had so shamefully deserted her? Then was a heaven opened to both with which the plaudits of the heathen throngs of London could not be compared. Though the past could not be recalled, what remained of the future was of heaven's own kind.

LAURENCE FOSTER CHURCH.



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Sincerely,
NORMAN E. MACK,
Chairman Democratic National Committee.

M. C. WETMORE,
Chairman Finance Committee.
C. N. HASKELL,
Treasurer.

Chicago, Aug. 29, 1906.

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(First published in Daily Leader, Sept. 12, 1903.)

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Each bid must be accompanied by a one hundred dollar deposit per volume to show the good faith of the bidder.

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The state printing board reserves the right to reject any or all bids.

Dated this 11th day of September, 1903.

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No. 18, 4:50 p. m.

No. 116, 8:40 a. m.

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No. 409 Ar., 10:15 a. m.

No. 418 Lv., (ex. Sunday), 6:30 a. m.

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No. 419 Lv., 5:00 p. m.

No. 417 Ar., (ex. Sunday), 3:10 p. m.

Denver, Enid & Gulf. East Bound.

No. 441 Ar., 9:20 a. m.

No. 442 Ar., 6:45 p. m.

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No. 443 Lv., 5:00 p. m.

No. 444 Lv., 6:50 p. m.

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No. 145 Lv., 9:25 p. m.

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No. 196, 2:40 p. m.

No. 198, 2:40 p. m.

No. 119, 6:25 p. m.

South Bound.

No. 565, 9:10 p. m.

No. 197, 1:10 p. m.

No. 199, 5:10 a. m.

No. 105, 10:45 a. m.

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No. 745, west bound, 9:05 a. m.

No. 746, east bound, 3:50 p. m.

Ft. Smith & Western. West Bound.

No. 1 Ar., 6:45 p. m.

No. 6 Ar., 10:20 a. m.

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No. 2 Lv., 8:50 a. m.

No. 6 Lv., 4:20 p. m.

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